

STATEMENT OF DETECTIVE TONY MARCOCCI
WESTMORELAND COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEYS OFFICE

OCTOBER 9, 2013

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Chairman Marsico and Committee Members,

Over the past 11 years, I have been honored to testify at both Federal and State Hearings about our current heroin and prescription pill problem in Westmoreland County. In 2002, before the Government Reform Committee, in Washington D. C. I reported 22 overdoses resulting in death. In 2010, before the Human Services Committee in Harrisburg, I reported 57 overdoses resulting in death. Now in October 2013, I sit before you to let you know that we are already at 72 overdoses resulting in death in Westmoreland County. Obviously, the path we have chosen to stop this trend is not working.

I have brought some evidence samples of "Stamp Bags" of Heroin with me today for you to understand a little better what I am talking about. These bags contain a very small quantity of Heroin, usually between .01 grams and .03 grams. The reason that such a small amount of Heroin can be put into these bags is because the purity of this Heroin is between 80 and 90 percent. Heroin buyers are able to purchase these bags on the streets of Westmoreland County for \$8.00 to \$10.00 per bag.

As you are aware in the 1980's and 1990's, we experienced an influx of Cocaine in our nation. Dealers realized that they had individuals who were willing to spend \$100.00 for a gram of Cocaine and as with most drugs; the dealers were able to make huge profits

from the sales of Cocaine. Law enforcement escalated the battle to combat this drug and the dealers, but it is a battle that is still going on today. Law enforcement officers have an even greater problem today, One gram of Heroin can be put into stamp bags and then into bundles (a ten bag unit of Heroin) and then into Bricks (a 50 bag unit of Heroin). Thus, increasing their profit from anywhere between \$400.00 to \$1,000.00 for their gram of Heroin.

As with any narcotic drug, individuals will build up a tolerance which over a short period of time will necessitate the use of more and more of the drug. As their need for more of the drug increases, individuals will seek the money to support their habits. Unfortunately, we see this as a rise in crime. Individuals often times begin their criminal careers by stealing from family members or close friends. But they will soon turn to stealing from others, typically in the form of retail thefts. All too often these individuals will soon turn to burglaries and robberies to support their habits. The end result has our typical narcotics user arrested for crimes committed to support a drug habit and the need to incarcerate them as a result of these crimes.

One of the problems facing us today is the warehousing of addicts in our prisons. The disease of addiction is treatable, but this cannot be done with minimal treatment, if any, while they are incarcerated. We need to improve programs in our institutions which can take a person in addiction and start them on the road to recovery. There are ways in which this can be done in both our State and County prisons.

I'm sure that the monies that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania spends to incarcerate far exceed the monies spent on prevention and rehabilitation. I think that this is one issue that needs to be addressed. Many of the individuals that I encounter on the

streets have been arrested and have spent time in County or State Institutions.

Individuals have told me that while they were incarcerated they received little to no treatment for their addiction. Those that did receive treatment found it to be deficient.

Studies have shown that anything less than 90 days of treatment for addiction is inadequate. How can we hope for any success from treatment, when inmates are expected to attend treatment for one hour a week while incarcerated? It seems that these individuals are caught in a revolving door of the criminal justice system. It may be more beneficial for us to give these individuals adequate, responsible and complete treatment while they are incarcerated, which may prevent them from traveling down the same path over and over again.

There are some programs available to us which can provide these types of treatment. The Day Reporting System, Diversionary programs, State Intermediate Punishment and Drug Courts are examples of programs that can and do work.

I have been involved in Law Enforcement for over 38 years, 28 of those years have been exclusively devoted to narcotics. With the rising populations of our correctional institutions and the sheer numbers of individuals arrested for violations of the narcotics laws. I suggest to you that what we have been doing is not working and that these issues need be addressed. No one deserves to contract or develop a terminal disease, and continue to let it go untreated.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.